

JANUARY 5, 1978

HUNGARIAN CROWN--EARLY YEARS

ANNCR:

AMERICAN SECRETARY OF STATE CYRUS VANCE IS LEADING AN AMERICAN DELEGATION TO BUDAPEST WHICH WILL FORMALLY RETURN THE CROWN OF SAINT STEPHEN TO HUNGARY ON FRIDAY. IN THE FIRST OF A TWO--PART REPORT, CORRESPONDENT RON PEMSTEIN PROVIDES THIS BACKGROUND ON THE ORIGIN OF THIS HISTORIC TREASURE.

VOICE:

ON CHRISTMAS DAY IN THE YEAR ONE THOUSAND, POPE SYLVESTER GAVE A GOLD CROWN TO HUNGARY'S FIRST KING, STEPHEN, AS A REWARD FOR CONVERTING THE HUNGARIANS TO CHRISTIANITY.

THE CROWN GIVEN BY POPE SYLVESTER TODAY FORMS THE UPPER PART OF THE MODERN CROWN. IT HAS FOUR GOLD BANDS JOINED TOGETHER AT THE TOP BY A GOLD PLAQUE WITH A CROSS SLANTED TO THE RIGHT.

ABOUT SEVENTY YEARS LATER, THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE DECIDED TO COMPETE FOR INFLUENCE WITH ROME IN HUNGARY. EMPEROR MICHAEL THE SEVENTH GAVE KING GEZA ANOTHER CROWN. THIS ONE WAS A GOLD HEADBAND DECORATED WITH PRECIOUS STONES AND ENAMEL. A SERIES OF NINE GOLDEN CHAINS HUNG FROM THE CROWN.

ABOUT A CENTURY LATER, THE TWO CROWNS WERE WELDED TOGETHER SYMBOLIZING THE COMPETITION BETWEEN ROME AND BYZANTIUM IN HUNGARY. BUT SAINT STEPHEN'S CROWN BECAME EVEN MORE OF A SYMBOL YEARS LATER AS HUNGARY STRUGGLED TO DEFINE ITSELF AS A NATION. THE KING, THE CHURCH AND THE ARISTOCRACY FOUGHT FOR POWER. BUT THEY FINALLY AGREED TO LOOK ON THE CROWN AS THE SYMBOL OF THE STATE. IT WAS DESIGNATED THE HOLY CROWN AND LEGAL PROVISIONS WERE DRAWN UP FOR ITS CARE AND SAFETY.

SAINT STEPHEN'S CROWN SYMBOLIZED THE NATION'S HOPES FOR A UNITED HUNGARY AT A TIME WHEN THE COUNTRY WAS SPLIT AMONG THE TURKS, THE HAPSBURGS AND TRANSYLVANIA. IT WAS SEIZED FOR A TIME BY BOTH THE TURKS AND THE AUSTRIANS. HUNGARIANS WOULD HIDE IT IN VILLAGES, EVEN BURY IT TO TRY TO KEEP IT FROM INVADERS.

IT WAS THAT SAME CONCERN FOR THE CROWN IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY WHICH SAW THE CROWN TAKEN OUT OF HUNGARY TO KEEP IT OUT OF SOVIET HANDS. SO THE CROWN BEING RETURNED TO HUNGARY THIS WEEK IS NO MERE PIECE OF JEWELRY.

ANNCR:

IN THE SECOND PART OF THIS REPORT CORRESPONDENT PEMSTEIN WILL TELL US ABOUT THE MODERN HISTORY OF THE CROWN, HOW IT CAME TO THE UNITED STATES AND HOW IT CAME BACK TO HUNGARY.

WJL/PBM

